

Frequently Asked Questions for Direct Care Workers (Personal Care Attendants) considering Self Determination arrangements with a MI Choice Participant

What is Self Determination?

Self Determination is an option for people who receive services at home through the MI Choice Waiver Program. The MI Choice Medicaid Waiver pays for services like personal care, meal preparation and house cleaning. The Self Determination option gives people the right to choose and hire their own workers and manage their services budget.

How do I qualify to be a worker?

There are minimum requirements for all workers:

A worker must be 18 years of age, go through a criminal background check, and have the ability to perform the work. A worker has to prove that he/she can legally work in the United States. Workers can't be a legal spouse, guardian or serve as a representative for the individual.

What about training?

Workers must have training in first-aid, blood borne pathogens and universal precautions and cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to perform personal care and other hands on services. The CPR training can be waived if the participant has a "do not resuscitate" order. Training is arranged during hiring. Training may include watching videos or attending a class. If a worker has already received required training and can show proof, additional training is not needed. An individual may have specific needs related to their condition that requires extra training. This is also discussed when the worker is hired. Workers are expected to show documentation of training within 30 days after starting work for the individual. Workers do not have to pay for the training.

How will I get paid?

When an individual decides to enroll in Self Determination, she/he works with the Supports Coordinator during person center planning to decide what kinds of services are needed, when services should be provided and who will provide services. The results of this "person-centered planning" process go into their Care Plan and a budget is developed to pay for those services. The individual budget includes the amount of worker wages, employee taxes, workers compensation and unemployment insurance.

When a worker is hired by an individual using Self Determination, the worker is offered an hourly rate by the individual that reflects the kind of work that needs to be done. The number of hours per week is also discussed.

Workers in Self Determination are paid by a "Fiscal Intermediary (FI)". This is an independent agency that pays the bills in the individual's budget. The FI is responsible for paying the worker for services provided. FIs also pay employee taxes, workers compensation and unemployment insurance. The individual signs each worker timesheet and sends the timesheet to the fiscal intermediary. The fiscal intermediary sends the worker a paycheck based on the signed timesheet. The fiscal intermediary will not pay the worker for more hours than what is authorized in the individual's budget. Workers who have questions about their paycheck must contact the fiscal intermediary.

Another option for Self Determination is the “Agency with Choice” model. In the Agency with Choice model, an individual and a home health agency serve as “co-employers”. The agency is the employer of record. The Agency pays the worker, worker taxes, worker’s compensation and unemployment insurance. The agency does not pay the worker for more service hours than what is authorized in the individual’s budget. The agency may have required training and a set hourly rate for workers. The individual is the managing employer. She or he establishes the work schedule and decides what tasks need to be performed. If the worker has questions about their paycheck with this option, the worker must contact the agency. If the worker has questions about the hours worked and duties performed, then the worker talks to the individual.

What about benefits?

Health insurance or other benefits are not offered to Self Determination workers. Vacation time is also not offered. Holiday pay may be arranged on an individual basis.

What about mileage?

Mileage reimbursement for workers to drive the individuals can be built into the budget. Driving individuals to medical appointments is not allowed. Workers are allowed to drive individuals to community events or run errands.

What about overtime?

Self Determination workers normally do not work more than 40 hours/week for an individual. This is for the safety of the worker and the individual. An individual can hire as many workers as needed. Many individuals in SD have more than one worker.

What about if I can’t make it to work?

Each person in Self Determination must have a back-up plan for when their workers can’t make it to work. How this works depends on the individual and is discussed at hiring.

Who decides the hours I work and what I do?

The individual decides the work schedule based on the hours authorized in the budget and in communication with the worker. The tasks are also decided by the individual and communicated to the worker.

What about a raise?

An individual may choose to start a worker at a particular hourly pay rate and then increase that hourly pay rate based on good performance at a later date. This raise needs to be authorized in the individual budget. This is discussed between the worker and the individual, generally when hired.

What happens if the individual’s health changes or they are in danger?

Emergency contacts should be provided to the worker when they are hired. An emergency contact may be a family member, friend or the support coordinator from the waiver agent.